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ABSTRACT

Children are dependent on professionals to find the ways in which the mysteries of interacting and conceptualizing in a new language can be unlocked. Child second language data and evidence concerning children's development suggest ways in which to accomplish that process. An elementary program in English as a second language (ESL) will be effective when the physical and human environments in and out of ESL classes are consistent with these developmental data. Understanding how children view the world and view language and their part in it can teach adults how to facilitate learning for them. Examples of cognitive, social, linguistic, and physical developmental activities are included. (MSE)

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HOW DO YOU EVALUATE YOUR OWN ELEMENTARY PROGRAM? LOOK TO KIDS*

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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You've put enormous energy into collecting materials, getting kids assessed, arguing for an aide. And now your program is off and running. How are you going to be sure you're doing the right things? How can you know when you are in the process of teaching in an elementary program that your program is successful? The answer begins and ends with kids. Kids—the reason why we are teaching and administering at all. Kids—each one a special challenge for us to find the ways in which the mysteries of interacting and conceptualizing in a new language can be unlocked. Kids—dependent on us, the professionals, to make the right decisions to enhance their lives.

Our main task, then, is to understand what it is kids must have to be successful in acquiring language. If those aspects are present in an ESL program in a systematic, well-conceived manner, then the program can be said to be successful. It would be unwise to suggest a definite one-to-one correspondence between where and how a person learns language and that person's proficiency. But it makes good sense to me to pay close attention to cognitive, social, linguistic and physical developmental knowledge of children, and then support those developments through environments which allow growth to take place.

Carol Urzúa, Assistant Professor in graduate education at Lewis and Clark College, authored *Talking Purposefully* and writes and speaks on behalf of kids.

*I am grateful to Jean Handscombe for careful reading of an earlier draft of this paper. This paper is revised from a plenary speech at the Summer TESOL Meeting in Toronto, 1983 which was redelivered in Houston by request from the organizers.

Excerpts from Vivian Gussin Paley, *Wally's Stories*. Copyright ©1981 by Harvard University Press, reprinted by permission of Harvard University Press.

I'd like to look first at what the characteristics of an effective learning environment are, based on data about child second language acquisition, and general knowledge about children.

Physical Environment

One of the first places to look for the appropriateness of an environment for young learners is in the physical appearance of the classroom itself. I remember when I was a supervisor of student teachers being told to teach the new teachers how to make an aesthetically pleasing bulletin board! I confess I was never very successful, mainly because I think bulletin boards should be stuffed with kids' work, messy but readable.

But far more important is whether the environment provides anything worth discussion. Rooms need to be brimming with play areas for dramatic play: table toys and puzzles, books, art and craft supplies, clay, puppets and musical instruments, animals and other materials which will stimulate children to use language in ways which will be meaningful. However, having such concrete materials available does not assure the teacher that language will actually take place. One kindergarten teacher looked into whether the materials were simply available, or whether they required children to interact in order to use them. She found that teachers tend to put objects on tables in a one-to-one correspondence with the chairs, thus preventing any interaction which might take place if children worked on a puzzle together. Thus, the teacher must always think in terms of buddies working together with the materials,—materials which require a partner.

Even more important than materials which invite interaction is what a teacher chooses to do with them. If a program is to be successful, a teacher must make wise choices about the kinds of materials and activities in which children will engage in order to activate their language learning strategies. There are a number of criteria for effective activities; I'd like to suggest four.

First of all, an activity for children must be *real*. The argument for making language learning meaningful has recently led our profession to an understanding of the need for functional/notional syllabi leading towards a broader view of competence which includes communication. Of course, good teachers of young children have for many years tried to make learning meaningful. But what is "real" to kids? Some things seem obvious to us as adults, and it is difficult to understand how it could not be viewed the same by children. Such was the case of Vivian Paley who writes in her extraordinary book, *Wally's Stories* about children's concept of measurement. She says, "I did not realize that rulers are not really real. We were about to act out 'Jack and the Beanstalk' when Wally and Eddie disagreed about the relative size of our two rugs."

Wally: The big rug is the giant's castle. The small one is Jack's house.

Eddie: Both rugs are the same.

Wally: They can't be the same. Watch me. I'll walk around the rug. No watch. Walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, walk—count these walks. Okay. Now count the other rug. Walk, walk, walk, walk. See? That one has more walks.

Eddie: No fair you cheated. You walked faster.

- Wally: I don't have to walk. I can just look.
Eddie: I can look too. But you have to measure it. You need a ruler.
About six hundred inches or feet.
Wally: We have a ruler.
Eddie: Not that one. Not the short kind. You have to use the long
kind that gets curled up in a box.
Wally: Use people. People's bodies. Lying down in a row.
Eddie: That's a great idea. I never even thought of that.

Wally announces a try-out for "rug-measurers". He adds one child at a time until both rugs are covered—four children end to end on one rug and three on the other. Everyone is satisfied, and the play continues with Wally as the giant on the rug henceforth known as the four-person rug. The next day Eddie measures the rugs again. He uses himself, Wally, and two other children. But this time they do not cover the rug.

- Wally: You're too short. I mean someone is too short. We need Warren. Where's Warren?
Teacher: He's not here to-day.
Eddie: Then we can't measure the rug.
Teacher: You can only measure the rug when Warren is here?
Jill: Because he's longer.
Deana: Turn everyone around. Then it will fit. (Eddie rearranges the measurers so that each is now in a different position. Their total length is the same.)
Eddie: No, it won't work. We have to wait for Warren.
Deana: Let me have a turn. I can do it.
Jill: You're too big, Deana. Look at your feet sticking out. Here's a rule. Nobody bigger than Warren can measure the rug.
Fred: Wait. Just change Ellen and Deana because Ellen is shorter.
Jill: She sticks out just the same. Wait for Warren.
Fred: Now she's longer than before, that's why.
Teacher: Is there a way to measure the rug so that we don't have to worry about people's sizes?
Kenny: Use short people.
Teacher: And if the short people aren't in the school?
Rose: Use big people.
Eddie: Some people are too big.
Teacher: Maybe using people is a problem.
Fred: Use three-year-olds.
Teacher: There aren't any three-year-olds in our class.
Deana: Use rulers. Get all the rulers in the room. I'll get the box of rulers.
Eddie: That was my idea, you know.
Deana: This isn't enough rulers.
Eddie: Put a short, short person after the rulers-Andy.
Andy: I'm not short, short. And I'm not playing this game.
Wally: Use the dolls.

Teacher: So this rug is ten rulers and two dolls long? (Silence). Here's something we can do. We can use one of the rulers over again, this way.

Eddie: Now you made *another* empty space.

Teacher: Eddie, you mentioned a tape measure before. I have one here.

(We stretch the tape along the edge of the rug, and I show the children that the rug is 156 inches long. The lesson is done. The next day Warren is back in school.)

Wally: Here's Warren. Now we can really measure the rug.

Teacher: Didn't we really measure the rug with the ruler?

Wally: Well, rulers aren't really real, are they?

(Paley 1981:13-16)

What is real to children, then, may be very different from adult reality, and teachers must choose activities with care and sensitivity. Besides being real, a second criterion for activities for children is that they must have meaning; they must have *purpose*. As M.A.K. Halliday noted:

The child knows what language is because he knows what language does. The determining elements in the young child's experience are the successful demands on language that he himself has made, the particular needs that have been satisfied by language for him. Language in all of these uses has come within his own direct experience, and because of this, he is subconsciously aware that language has many functions that affect him personally. (1973:10)

What these functions might be is viewed differently by different kid watchers. Halliday, himself, identifies seven "models" of language, ranging from instrumental and regulatory, to interactional, to imaginative.

The implication of this basic notion of purposefulness is that all activities in an ESL program should be for real intentions within children's experiences. Perhaps an example of a meaningful activity will clarify this notion. An experience that I have observed on occasion has to do with the teacher putting a small object in a box, and, through shaking it frequently, quizzing kids about its contents. Children guess, and the teacher is pleased because it appears to be a good vocabulary exercise, and children are talking. But what are they talking about? A guessing game in which the knower (the teacher) knows the answer, but gives no further information to the non-knowers, a situation which rarely occurs in life outside of classrooms. A more effective activity would be a prototype of a kind of experience they may encounter, one in which meaning is inherent in the experience. Here's a more effective practice: the teacher records the guesses of the children on the board, and when the children are tired of guessing, puts the children in pairs. Each pair then goes through the list, classifying them into two groups: a group of objects they think are really possible, and a group they think are impossible to be contained in the box. Taking their possible list, they now rank them, deciding in the process what they really think is in the box. Now, it is true that few children will ever have to convince anyone else of the contents of a box! But involving themselves in a persuasive activity will help them to develop language

forms necessary for regulating others' behavior and to be logical in their reasoning, skills that they will use effectively for the rest of their lives. The exact content of the activity, then, may not be something children will have any reason to know about outside of the in-class work. But the kind of situation the content establishes should allow children to use language in ways which will increase their power.

A third criterion for an effective activity in ESL programs is that it must allow for *individual variation*, variation which takes in learning strategies as well as linguistic differences. H. Douglas Brown (1981) points out in his book *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* that there are a number of cognitive and affective variables which influence the ways in which learners process linguistic information, as well as the ways they function in social and cognitive situations.

Learners vary, he suggests, in their tolerance for ambiguity as well as their reflectivity and impulsivity; they bring to the learning task differential measures of self-esteem and inhibition; in short, they are motivated by different things.

Further indication of differences specific to children is a study by Lily Wong-Fillmore (1982). Through following 48 Chinese and Mexican American children, she concludes there is no single way to say what a good or a bad learner is. A Mexican American child, whom she calls Sancho, is, by all measures, a better language learner than most of the other children. He is described as a risk-taker who is eager to perform and use opportunities to get peers' and the teacher's attention. On the other hand, a Chinese child, whom she calls Jade, also regarded as one of the better language learners in the study, is described as reflective and analytical, good at listening and eager to achieve academically.

Thus, if we are to have programs in which both the Jades and the Sanchos of our classrooms are going to succeed, we must arrange for activities which can accommodate a wide variety of differences and still remain successful for learners.

I have been experimenting with such activities in some units of curriculum on which I have been working for a couple of years. In one such unit, *Mobiles*, children do some preliminary interviewing, cutting and pasting in order to prepare pictures of their favorite things, inserting string to hang the pictures on dowels to create mobiles. The actual stringing of the pictures, and the balancing of the mobile can be approached in a number of different ways. One four-year-old I observed never spoke a word; working with another partner, she conceived of her strategy, and began moving strings back and forth along the dowel without sharing the strategy at all. The mobile eventually balanced. Some children I have watched put everything on the floor and sit and look at it for a while, moving the pictures on the floor to achieve an aesthetic mix. The actual hanging of the mobile is almost an after-thought. Still other children dash madly to the rope stretched across the room, fling string over the rope, and tie pictures on, pushing and pulling on pictures until the dowel balances. Some children choose to work with several friends; some children want to work alone. Because the activity can be done with no interactive language, even the beginning language learner can have a successful experience. Thus, effective activities in an ESL program provide alternative means to achieve the same goal.

Some educators have suggested that an effective way to approach individual variation is to match the differences noted in learners with various kinds of teaching approaches and environments. David Hunt (1973, 1970) describes various environments which he suggests can accommodate a differential need in learners

for structure and guidance by the teacher. Learners who are relatively inflexible and absolute, with lower tolerance for ambiguity, require an environment which contains short, definite goals; a variety of activities, fewer choices, and carefully sequenced, consistent rules. Those learners who have greater tolerance for ambiguity, who enjoy considering several points of view before proceeding, and who profit from wide-ranging discussions and feedback, require an environment where many choices are given. Such students do best when they are allowed to decide how and when their work will be accomplished; mobility is allowed, and individual projects are encouraged. Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil's (1980) important work, *Models of Teaching*, defines various educational approaches which match some of the differences noted by Hunt (1970, 1973). In the *Mobiles* unit, for example, some students previously identified as needing more structure are led by the teacher in a step-by-step process of how the balancing will proceed, while students who need less structure are instructed simply to "make the pictures balance".

A fourth criterion for the selection of successful activities is that it helps children acquire more focused, precise language to facilitate their school experience. Our children are not simply acquiring a second language as an academic exercise; they are in other classrooms competing with native English speakers put in a position daily to use whatever developing proficiency they have to acquire content material *right now*. The activities chosen for the ESL classrooms must, therefore, have subject matter content. Children, perhaps even more than adults, learn language to facilitate accomplishing other things. Uniquely prepared for emerging themselves in the learning experience as a result of their learning stage of concrete operations, children through the fifth grade are relatively uninterested in *analyzing* language. Therefore, the school's emphasis on surface language forms appears to the child to be a very bewildering way of getting at what they want to accomplish: becoming better and better users of language in their social studies and science classes, with their reading teachers, and certainly on the tests which come regularly. Our responsibility is to use the same kind of subject matter they might face in their mainstream classes, and present it in such a way that the concepts are clear, and the language used to talk about the concepts can become increasingly complex.

One such content can be found in science materials. Science materials allow kids to hypothesize, to use suppositions, and to be tentative. Science materials are frequently concrete and manipulative. They allow children to do what they do intuitively: ask questions in order to know. Each learner approaches science content from a unique position and accommodates the knowledge at whatever level is being processed at the time. Although the vocabulary of science is specialized, everyone approaches the vocabulary afresh. And, very importantly, children find it exhilarating to be involved in such experiences as casting shadows (thus applying principles of physical science), or growing plants in different environments, observing and writing about classroom pets, or taking nature hikes (thus applying principles of biological science). When children are excited about the materials, they will find more and more precise ways to talk about their ideas.

Human environment

So far in this paper, I have suggested that the decisions a teacher makes about what to do with the physical environment largely determines how effective

for language learning that program is going to be. But even without these aspects, a program can be very successful if the human environment is also effective. The human environment: the kinds of people with whom children come in contact with and the quality of interaction children have with people. Who are these people, and what do they contribute?

The most important person is the teacher. As a linguistically superior adult, the teacher should function in a similar role to the adult caregivers in children's home life. It is increasingly clear in first language acquisition that the quality of interaction between the caregiver and the child is critical to the child's proficiency, and, as Gordon Wells (1981) has convincingly shown, to the child's future acquisition of literacy. Researchers like Catherine Snow (1977) and Toni Cross (1977) have documented that adult input to children needs to have elements of expansion, extension, repetition, and increasingly longer conversational turns to facilitate for growth in children's language. The unique register of caregiver speech is important, then, not because it acts as a model for forms children need to hear and emulate but because it is fine-tuned, sensitive interaction with a learner who is focusing on the maintenance of the social bond.

Children rarely focus on the form of input. Although there certainly are cultural, and indeed, subcultural differences in the character of the interaction between caregivers and children, it is unlikely that any discussion between the two has focused on surface aspects of language. Rather, in most situations, children and caregivers attempt to understand and accommodate the other through what Wells (1981) calls "negotiated interaction". In these facilitative interactions, both the caregiver and the child constantly search for ways of understanding what the other is trying to mean, while the caregiver, in an unconscious way, contributes language which is closely related to the child's preceding communication, and provides the means by which children can enlarge their linguistic resources. In work with L2 children, Urzúa (1981) found that a particularly effective second language human environment includes many of the same aspects as first language adult input, particularly expansions, extensions, and repetitions.

In fact, in one kindergarten class, the input to a second language child frequently was reminiscent of characteristic adult input to first language children. The teacher, Bonnie Shaffer, would say, "Mrs. Shaffer didn't understand you," or "Mrs. Shaffer has on boots," using a noun for a pronoun similar to parents who say, "Let mommy do it".

Another longer interchange between the teacher and the second language learner was also reminiscent of parent-child interaction. For example, one day, the kindergarten child began teasing Bonnie Shaffer about the microphone she was wearing for the video taping.

- Child: Hot. (Touches microphone).
 Teacher: It's not hot. It's not hot. It's a microphone.
 Child: (Takes teacher's hand and places it on microphone). See hot?
 Teacher: Cold. It's cold.
 Child: See hot?
 Teacher: No. It's not hot. It's cold.
 Child: Ahm. . . . hot.
 Teacher: No. It's not hot. etc.

Doesn't that interaction remind you of the kind of "hanging-in-there" strategy utilized by effective mothers, such as one of the mothers in my own research who was talking to her 2-year-old daughter as she played in the bathtub?

(In the bathtub)

Adult: Does a fish swim?

Child: No.

Adult: No?

Child: No. I eat it.

Adult: You gonna eat the fish?

Child: No. All wet.

Adult: It's all wet all right. The whole bathroom is wet.

Child: Whole bathroom wet.

Adult: Yeah. The floor is wet. The towel is wet. The bathtub is wet. The shower curtain is wet. My hair is wet. My knees are wet.

Child: My knees are wet.

(Urzúa 1981:Appendix)

Patient caregivers, and good second language teachers, then, employ the "hanging-in-there" strategy. Besides employing many of the strategies in interacting with children which are known to be effective in first language acquisition, teachers of ESL children should also be consciously aware of their ability to provide vocabulary and relevant surface forms at times when children require them in specific contexts. Children will learn those words and surface forms which code the experience they are having (See Wells 1974). I remember well the child who taught me this concept. I was observing in a preschool in Texas, and the four-year-olds were having a free choice time. One little Mexican American boy was sitting on the floor, manipulating a bunch of plastic animals in and out of a corral and a barn. I plopped down beside him and tried to make conversation. He didn't look up. He took his sheep and waddled it into the barn. I then said to him, "Oh, you're putting the sheep into the barn." There was a slight pause. Then he picked up the cow, and sauntered it toward the barn. "Oh," said I, "You're putting your cow into the barn." Another slight pause. Then a flurry of animals were hurried into the barn, each with an appropriate matching linguistic form from me. When all the animals were safe inside the barn, he then began taking them all out, one by one, waiting for me to match the form with the context. We must have sat there for fifteen minutes. We never had eye contact, nor did he ever open his mouth. We both focused on an experience he enjoyed, through which linguistic meanings could be encoded. The "conversation" ended when he got up and walked away.

Sometimes the bustle of classroom activity precludes extended interaction of the kind I had with my little four-year-old friend. But even in short encounters, teachers can provide the language children seek to match concepts they already know. The kindergarten teacher, Bonnie Shaffer, teaches us how this is done while she and a five-year-old second language child are looking at a book.

Child	Teacher
That a braid. (points to her own hair.)	She has braids. Her hair is braided.
	(Pulling gently on the child's hair.) This is a pony tail. What does mother call it?
Mother - (Makes cutting gestures with two fingers.)	
(Gestures cutting.)	What did mother do? What did she do? right here? (She runs her fingers in a cutting motion.)
(Shakes head yes.)	She <i>cut</i> . Mother <i>cut</i> your hair.
	Yes, she did. Mother <i>cut</i> your hair in back. She used the scissors to <i>cut</i> your hair.

(Urzúa 1981:29)

Thus the teacher provides the linguistic codes for the concepts the little girl understands. As important as the teacher is in the human environment of ESL programs, there is another group of people who are also enormously important to successful programs for kids, and that is other kids. Wong-Fillmore's (1976) important observations of five Mexican immigrant children showed that all children, but especially the better language learners, "hooked up" with other children, utilizing their friend's superior linguistic skills to give needed input. Children, far more than adults, seek input from people more than from books. Because of this, there are at least two important aspects of ESL programs which teachers must establish: first of all, the children must be in mixed-ability groups, so that there are some linguistically superior children in a group, and second, children must have many opportunities to interact with native speakers of the language, if it is possible.

It is the practice in most schools in North America to "track" ESL children by proficiency in English. Thus, all of the beginning speakers of the language are placed together, resulting in a program where no learners' English is any better than any other. Does that make sense? From an institutional view point, it's perfect. There are, supposedly, no variations to worry about. The same text can be used for everyone, and criteria can be established for exiting, and so on. From a child's viewpoint, however, it's a nightmare. Because of the lack of proficiency among all the children, no child can provide input for anyone else and all children are forced to rely on the only linguistically superior person in the room - the teacher.

But the teacher is never enough. As Wong-Fillmore so convincingly writes:

Teachers - no matter how cleverly their instructional programs are conceived - cannot provide enough input of the sort to permit children to learn language effectively. . . He or she cannot provide the contextual information a learner needs in order to learn how the language is used in real-life situations.

(1976:728)

The reason, of course, is that social factors are critical in the second language acquisition process and if we are trying to provide an environment which is effective for children, we cannot segregate them from better speakers of their own age. Our ESL kids need to be in dynamic, interactive situations with native English speakers and/or linguistically superior peers. Contact among groups needs to be vigorously promoted. Activities must be planned which cannot be successful unless at least two people work together. Such activities as communication exercises in which one person tells another, separated by a barrier, how to replicate a design, fit this description. Without the reinforcement from superior linguistic peers, the new language will find limited use.

Another group of people kids should have extensive interaction with are other adults. An effective ESL program, then, is aware of the sociocultural influences on language use, and provides a variety of contexts in which children learn the appropriate language for that place and group. Ventriglia (1982) in her informative book *Conversations of Miguel and Maria*, demonstrates differential language use through recorded conversations of children learning a second language. In one scene, children are enjoying the celebration of Cinco de Mayo, Mexican independence day, by gathering with their parents at round, formally set tables to eat Mexican sweetbread and drink coffee and soda. Some children at one table begin tossing sugar cubes back and forth, with such requests as "Gimme the sweetie!" and "Lemane have the sweetie!" The teacher decides to join the group, and immediately the tone and formality of the situation changes. "Maria, please pass the sugar," says the teacher. And the children, who only a few minutes earlier understood "Gimme the sweetie" as appropriate with their friends, now switch to:

"May I have some soda?"

"Please pass the sugar."

"May I please go out and play?"

(1982:53-54)

Kids need lots of opportunities to interact with the principal, the janitor, volunteer grandparents, other kids' parents, and even older children. The more exposure to other situations and people they have, the more they will acquire more devices to express different uses of language.

So far in this paper I have suggested that an effective ESL program for elementary kids is one in which the physical and human environment includes materials and interactions that children need to acquire the new language. By this time, you may be thinking that the ESL teacher's job is complex and exhausting. And you're right! But the job is just beginning. If a program is to be successful, it cannot stop with the few minutes of formal ESL class; it must extend into the mainstream classroom where non-native English speaking children spend most of their day.

There are numerous things an ESL teacher can do to facilitate communication between the mainstream classroom and her or his ESL program; a discussion of these would be another entire paper. But I would like to suggest here that ESL specialists must know what their children face when they leave their classrooms; they must know how effective the environment outside of ESL class really is. There is no other way to do this than by following children around the school, observing what kind of interactions they have, with whom, what kinds of instruction they are getting in other classes, and how they are viewed by their teachers.

People who do this ethnographic work find the process and the information so obtained invaluable. For example, Nancy Hansen-Krening (personal communication) of the University of Washington, was asked to evaluate some migrant students. She followed three of the kids throughout the day. Horrifyingly, she found that none of the children ever had any recess, their only possible interaction time with native English speakers, because they were being put into so many special classes. In each of these classes, the children's "problem" was diagnosed as reading. However, each of the four different reading classes they attended approached reading in a different way. None of the teachers in these approach programs communicated with each other at all.

Teachers aren't the only ones who don't often communicate. Daphne Brown (1979), in her book *Mother Tongue to English*, followed Bengali speaking children as they became socialized into British schools. Viewing these children as dumb, or deaf, and sometimes, mute, other children would have little to do with them, and left to their own devices, the Bengali children often spent whole days in silence.

Many of my own students, who are public school teachers, discover similar situations when they do case studies in schools. A high school teacher, Rich Chapin, observing a fifteen-year-old Vietnamese boy, writes:

Huy had virtually no observable interaction with other students in lunch, drafting, English, and initially in P.E. class. In ESL he has a peer tutor with whom he talks frequently during class. He also talks to Trang, the other Vietnamese student. However, the peer tutor is in his math class where they don't talk, even to say hello. . .

All of the teachers were extremely solicitous of Huy. None made unfair or demeaning demands. Mostly, they left him alone - to do his work, read independently, etc. This behavior was reinforced because Huy manages his time very well, works independently, and does not initiate interaction. Thus the teacher who cannot afford to take significant time from the class as a whole is assured that at least he is working.

(Chapin 1983:4)

Perhaps, Chapin surmised, Huy spoke Vietnamese with his housemate, Trang. The boys said no. Chapin wasn't sure:

I have been following Huy and Trang around school, hiding in the bushes as they walk past on their way home, sending them to a specified part of the library for a project where I had hidden a microphone, etc. in a vain attempt to catch them speaking Vietnamese in school. They just don't. I thought the library project required complex communication - sufficiently so to prompt use of Vietnamese. The tape, however, was blank. To confirm this I sent them a second time and hid behind the bookshelves. Their goal was for Trang to teach Huy how to use the library-card catalogues, periodical guide, call numbers, reference section, check out system. Hard stuff to do if you don't talk, and I was going to test Huy the next day. All of the communication occurred via grunts, pointing, gestures, and force of example. I think I may have heard Trang say, 'You do it,' after he demonstrated the check out procedure. The block against Vietnamese in school is very strong, and there is evidently a

derivative block against any verbal communication... Whatever the cause, the fact is, they don't talk—ever.

(Chapin 1983:6)

It is difficult, when confronted with these data, to stay unaffected. Frequently, concerned teachers try to intervene with the students, giving them strategies for how to cope with their environment. For example, this same teacher tried to tell Huy how to get into conversations, and about what topics he might talk. Huy was "aware of the fact that other students felt as uncomfortable talking to him as he did to them. We talked about shyness - his and theirs, and of the general difficulty which language barriers erect" (Chapin 1983:7).

Sometimes, the intervention that ESL teachers must do is with the teacher of the child. After observing a Mexican American fourth grade boy for hours, another student of mine, Diane Sharken, could count only *nine* words in production, and an equally paltry number of verbal interactions with anyone, including the teacher. She, therefore, began an informal interview with him, and found, to her dismay, that the only people the boy thought could help him learn English were two best friends, one of whom had just moved away. Sharken, therefore, decided that suggesting some strategies to the teacher might be helpful for the boy. The following are some of her suggestions:

1. Speak with him, and give him responsibilities in the classroom.
2. Plan time each week to do something simple with him, such as prepare materials. It should be conversationally oriented.
3. Allow him to invite English speaking friends to a special corner for structured activity.
4. Set up a variety of interview situations through the year, once a month, if possible, in an area of his interest. These could be a poll of other students, or teachers.
5. Have him read with a first grader who speaks English. Help him prepare the selection.

(Chapin 1983:15)

Sharken's sensitive intervention reminds us that observation of children is not the end of our responsibilities in providing an effective ESL program. As a result of the programmatic evaluation in and out of ESL class, we must then become advocates for children. Our advocacy may take us into places both within and without the educational system, places we didn't dream might be our territory: into the superintendent's office to discuss differential grouping of native and non-native English kids; into the textbook hearings to plead for books which are sensitive to multicultural and multilingual issues; into PTA meetings to share the excitement and benefits of diversity; into legislatures to demand legislation which will guarantee, not just a minimal education, not even an adequate one, but an exceptional education for second language learners.

I suggested at the beginning that kids are dependent on the professionals to make the right decisions so their lives can be enhanced. Thus we've come full circle. By looking at some child second language data and children's development, it is clearer what some of those right decisions are. An elementary ESL program will be effective when the physical and human environments in and out of ESL

classes are consistent with these developmental data. When I wish to know whether my program is reaching its potential, then, I must look to kids. I must listen to what they have to teach me about what will facilitate learning for them, and understand how they view the world. Again returning to Vivian Paley's (1981) *Wally's Stories*, let us conclude, then, by reading to a discussion and understanding what the children's view is of language and their part in it. During a discussion one day, Paley asked her class, "If you were in charge of the world, would you make only one language, or many languages, the way it is now?"

- Tanya: One language. Oh yes! Then I could understand everyone in the world.
- Eddie: No. Let it stay this way so different countries keeps on being not the same. Then you can take trips to see what those countries are like and how they talk.
- Ellen: I like the world the way it is but I don't like fighting.
- Teacher: Is that because they have different languages?
- Ellen: Well, if they can't understand each other they might think good words sound like bad words.
- Wally: She means like if someone says, 'Let's play,' in French, then in Chinese they might think he said, 'Let's fight'.
- Warren: Keep it this way because if you're Chinese you would have to learn English.
- Teacher: Would English have to be the language everyone learns?
- Warren: I don't know what God likes to talk. Wait, I changed my mind. Let everyone say the same language. Then when my mommy and daddy speak quietly I could understand them.
- Tanya: I changed my mind too. Better not have the same language. Here's why: whenever this whole world had the same language everyone would say they want *their* language to be the one everyone has to have. Then everyone would blame someone else for giving them the wrong language.
- Akemi: If everyone speak Japan, everyone have to live there. My country too small for the big America.
- Warren: Everyone can come to China. It's much bigger. Let Chinese be the language. No, I changed my mind. Let my mommy and daddy talk English *all* the time.

(Paley 1981:119-20)

But it is Wally who has the last word. Later in the week, he dictates this story:

A little boy lived all alone in a deep forest. When he wanted to know a word, he asked lions and tigers and wolves. They told him pretend words because he couldn't speak animal language. One day he saw a lady and a man who didn't have a little boy.

'What language do you talk?'

'Animal pretend talk.'

'That's okay because we can teach you people's language. Which one do you want to learn?'

'English.'

'Good because that's our language. What words do you want to know?'

'Lion, tiger, and wolf.'

'You already know them. You just said them.'

'Then animal pretend talk must be English.'

So they lived happily ever after. But the man and lady knew some words the boy didn't know, so they did have a lot to teach him.

(Paley 1981:119-121)

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